

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TAIPEI 01957 311245Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
CU-04 /065 W
-----057799 010225Z /66
R 310856Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6922

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS : SOPN, TW, US
SUBJECT : CHINA POST SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL SUPPLEMENT:
CCK, WARTS AND ALL

1. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CHINA POST ON MARCH 24 ISSUED A SPECIAL MAGAZINE SUPPLEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF ELECTION OF CHIANG CHING-KUO FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA (ROC) WHICH IS DRAWN ENTIRELY FROM COMMENTARIES ON CCK AND THE ROC BY WESTERN COLUMNISTS APPEARING OVER THE PAST YEAR IN THE U.S. AND ELSEWHERE. SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THIS SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT SEEM NOTEWORTHY. FIRST, THERE IS A DISARMINGLY INGENUOUS FOREWORD BY POST EDITOR NANCY YU HUANG STATING THAT THE COMPILATION OF ARTICLES CONTAINED IN THE SUPPLEMENT ARE ALL "...WRITTEN BY OBJECTIVE OBSERVERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES..." AND THAT THEY ARE REPRODUCED IN THE SUPPLEMENT BECAUSE "...IT IS ONLY FITTING AND PROPER THAT WE...ENABLE OUR READERS AT HOME TO HAVE A CORRECT IDEA OF THE MAN WHO WILL BE OUR NATIONAL LEADER IN THE NEXT SIX YEARS." WE ARE NOT, AT THIS JUNCTURE, QUITE CLEAR WHAT THE EDITOR MEANS BY "READERS AT HOME." WE DO KNOW THE POST (CIRCULATION ABOUT 30,000) IS SOLD ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO A FOREIGN ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY AND ASSUME THAT THE ARTICLES CONTAINED IN THIS SUPPLEMENT

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PAGE 02 TAIPEI 01957 311245Z

ARE INTENDED FOR THAT READERSHIP AND THAT COPIES OF THE SUPPLEMENT WENT WITH EACH COPY OF THE MARCH 24 ISSUE.

2. SECONDLY, WHILE THE NET IMPRESSION IS A GENERALLY FAVORABLE ONE, THE COLUMNS WRITTEN BY WESTERN JOURNALISTS CONTAIN ALLUSIONS TO MANY OF THE LESS SAVORY ASPECTS OF THE PRESIDENT-ELECT'S PAST LIFE AND FRANK CRITICISMS OF

THE ROC SO WELL KNOWN OUTSIDE TAIWAN BUT NEVER BEFORE FREELY PUBLISHED HERE. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE ARE REFERENCES TO CHIANG KAI-SHEK'S DIVORCE OF CCK'S MOTHER, RUMORS ABOUT YOUNGER BROTHER WEI-KUO'S JAPANESE MOTHER, CCK'S OWN EARLY COMMITMENT TO COMMUNISM, AND HIS LEGENDARY BRUTALITY AS A SECURITY OFFICER BOTH ON THE MAINLAND AND LATER ON TAIWAN. ONE PASSAGE REFERS TO HIS "SUPERFICIALITY IN IMPLEMENTING TAIWANIZATION." ANOTHER EVEN QUOTES A TAIWANESE AS CALLING CCK A DICTATOR, BUT A "BENEVOLENT ONE." THERE ARE DEROGATORY DESCRIPTIONS OF CCK EARLIER IN HIS CAREER, SUCH AS "CHIEF EXECUTIONER," "WIDELY REGARDED AS SINISTER," AND "HARD-LINE SECURITY OFFICER." ANOTHER VIOLATION OF LOCAL TABOO OCCURS IN SEVERAL CHARACTERIZATIONS OF CCK IN WHICH HE IS FAVORABLY COMPARED TO HIS FATHER.

3. THIRD, AND PERHAPS MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN CRITICISMS OF CCK THE MAN, ARE TANGENTIAL REMARKS WHICH TREAT SUBJECTS NORMALLY CONSIDERED WITHIN THE SACROSANCT AREA OF UNCHALLENGEABLE "NATIONAL POLICY." SEVERAL ARTICLES DISCOUNT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROPOSED INTENTION TO RETURN TO THE MAINLAND. ONE ARTICLE REFERS TO NATION-ALIST ARMIES WHICH CAME TO TAIWAN AS "CARPETBAGGERS." ANOTHER MAKES AN OBLIQUE REFERENCE TO THE ISLAND NATION OF NATIONALIST CHINA AS ONE WHICH LONG AGO WAS CONSIGNED TO THE "HISTORICAL GARBAGE HEAP." LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TAIPEI 01957 311245Z

4. FINALLY, SEVERAL OF THESE ARTICLES FROM FOREIGN JOURNALS DISCUSS NORMALIZATION AND PRESENT ARGUMENTS WHICH SUPPORT THE FORBIDDEN THESIS THAT THE US/ROC MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY IS NOT NECESSARY TO PRESERVE THE SAFETY OF TAIWAN (REASON: BECAUSE THE PRC IS INHIBITED BY ITS INTEREST IN MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH WESTERN NATIONS AND BY PRESSURES ON ITS BORDER WITH THE USSR FROM ENGAGING IN BLOCKADE OR ATTACK). ANOTHER PRESENTS ARGUMENTS WHICH SUPPORT THE THESIS THAT THE U.S. EMBASSY IS NOT VITAL TO THE FUTURE WELL-BEING OF THE ISLAND.

5. COMMENT: THIS COMPILATION ISSUED ON THE OCCASION OF CCK'S ELECTION CONTAINS, ALONG WITH MUCH FAVORABLE COMMENTARY, SOME OF THE MOST UNORTHODIX CRITICISMS OF CCK, HIS REGIME AND ITS LEGITIMACY, RECENTLY (OR PERHAPS EVER) SEEN IN A LOCAL, LEGAL PUBLICATION. WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHAT OFFICIAL LEVEL OF THE GROC, IF ANY, APPROVED PUBLICATION OF THIS SUPPLEMENT AND EXACTLY WHAT ITS EDITORS HOPED TO ACHIEVE. OUR INITIAL REACTION AND THAT OF A FEW MEDIA SOURCES WE HAVE CONTACTED THUS FAR IS THAT THIS APPEARS TO BE A LOW-RISK ATTEMPT TO GAIN

CREDIBILITY FOR, AND TO IMPRESS FOREIGN READERSHIP WITH, THE OBJECTIVITY OF THE ROC PRESS IN PRESENTING THESE VIEWS OF FOREIGN WRITERS; ALSO, ON BALANCE, THE SUPPLEMENT DOES GIVE A VERY FAVORABLE PICTURE OF CCK AND HIS GOVERNMENT. NEVERTHELESS, THE NATURE OF THE COMMENTARY AND THE EDITOR'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THESE WESTERN AUTHORS AS "OBJECTIVE OBSERVERS" MAKE IT AN EVENT OF INTEREST IN ITSELF. UNGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PRESIDENT ELECT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TAIPEI01957
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780141-0476
Format: TEL
From: TAIPEI
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978031/aaaaaarh.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fef080b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3095864
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHINA POST SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL SUPPLEMENT: CCK, WARTS AND ALL
TAGS: SOPN, TW, US, (CHIANG CHING-KUO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fef080b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014